2: Gourou--182-183 N-5 (1939 ?) 1945 Laotians
116, 161

Laos

Laos, in its hilly and its flat areas, belongs entirely to the sparsely peopled Indochinese regions. Statistical documents are particularly dubious for Laos: the regular 1: 100,000 maps of the Service Géographique de l'Indochine do not yet cover more than the smaller part of it; the areas of the communes or ban are not known, which are reasons for not attempting an exhaustive study of the population distribution. We shall be [183] content with some general data, which represent all that can be found out at the present time about the quantitative distribution of the Laos population.

Laos has an area of 231,000 sq. km. and a population of one million inhabitants, or a density of 4.3 per sq. km.

3: Robequain--53 S-5 (no date) 1944 Laotians
161

"Laos, the only country in Indo-China which does not extend to the deltas, has an average of only four. [EJ: persons per square kilometer]"

6: Goudal--5 S-3 (1934) 1938 Laotians-1-4
116, 101, 161, 141, 463, 177.65 France
636.65

"The Tai are of Mongolian race. They came from China and formed various groups, including the Laotians (and the Siamese) and the predominant ethnical group in Upper Tonking. Their numbers are assessed at a million. They are of less than average height (1.59 metres). As a people they are very gay and hospitable. Like the Cambodians, the Laotians are Buddhists, but their religious sense goes hand in hand with very great moral freedom. They are indifferent farmers but engage frequently in fishing and hunting and are excellent boatmen. As traders they possess remarkable qualities.

For a long time the Laotian was considered as an apathetic creature, hating all effort and anxious only to enjoy the present without worrying about the morrow or without trying to improve his moral well-being or his material existence by persevering labour. It cannot be denied that this people, whose country was repeatedly laid waste throughout the centuries by invasions from the north and the west, seemed at the time of our arrival in Indo-China to be doomed to decadence. . . At the present time the country has roads and tracks, and its doors are open to commercial and industrial undertakings which have already done much for the development of the land and its mineral wealth. The local authorities have no difficulty in securing the very active co-operation of the inhabitants in the contruction of roads and tracks. . . The legend

of the Laotian as an idle creature, exercising passive resistance to any attempt to make use of his intelligence or his physical labour, had disappeared. Far from taking no interest in public welfare as was long asserted, the Laotians on the contrary seem to take a lively interest in it, and in particular in the progress of the development of the country and of the schools and medical institutions that are being established. (2)

2. Léon Archimbaud: Rapport au nom de la Commission des finances sur le budget général des Colonies (1928), pp. 88-89. This point of view is confirmed by the following statement:

'It has been repeatedly alleged that the Laotian abhors work and does only what is strictly necessary to provide for his own needs and for those of his family. He is said to have two serious defects: a very idle mind and a hatred of effort. This view is mistaken. It is certainly true that there is a certain fundamental apathy and indolence about the Laotian but this can be quite naturally explained by his background and the circumstances

in which his material existence has so far been passed.

'Times have now changed, the country is entirely pacified and war and piracy are merely a memory. . . . Exports of raw materials which were practically non-existent a mere 15 years ago are now increasing rapidly and this is clearly proof that the Laotian worker is not, as has been said, indifferent to gain, but that he can collaborate effectively with the settlers.

'The whole question is one of making use of his services in a manner suited to his special mentality, customs, qualities and defects. It is essential to treat him fairly and kindly; his intelligence and his docility of character enable him to adapt himself gradually to modern working methods. The tin mines in the province of Cammon have for several years been employing Laotian workers who have proved completely satisfactory both for mining the ore and for its treatment.

'Similarly, in connection with road making, in Upper and Lower Laos groups of workers have been used for cutting down

trees and clearing away stumps and undergrowth in the heart of a mountainous country where conditions of work are difficult and resources are slight. Under the skilful direction of our administrators and engineers the use of Laotian labour has proved satisfactory in almost every case.' (M. Bosc: Rapport d'ensemble sur le Laos. Conference on Native Communities held at the International Colonial Exhibition, Paris, 1931.)"

10: d'Orleans--301-302 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 161

"The population of the town [LSS: Luang Prabang] itself, estimated by Macleod in 1836 at 5,000, by Pallegoin at 80,000, by Monhot at 7,000 or 8,000 and by Garnier at 15,000, strikes me as being nearest to the last mentioned total. My reasons for thinking so are as follows. [302] From the summit of the hill which overlooks the town I mentally divided it into twelve or fourteen squares of about the same area, and in one of these squares I counted 110 houses. Allowing eight inhabitants to each house, we should have a total of 12,000, and this cannot be far from the truth, for the Siamese Colonel's list of taxpayers makes the total about 11,000.

With regard to the total population of the State, Macleod's estimate was only 50,000, but Garnier puts it at treble, and this is not, I fancy, much off the mark."

23: Franck--302 [2] T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 101, 161, 634

"Laos has eight divisions, of which Luang Prabang is the largest and the only one still boasting a king of its own. A century ago most of it belonged to ethnologically related Siam. I have already mentioned that this greatest division of French Indo-China, about as large and of much the same shape as Italy, has fewer inhabitants than Detroit. This is largely because it was so often sacked, and its people killed by the Chinese, who wanted the land, or carried off by the Siamese to populate her sparsely settled regions along Menam."

23: Franck--330-331 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
161 Ethnic subgroup

"Of the aboriginal tribes driven into the mountains by the Tai invasion of nearly two thousand years ago, it is estimated that there are still a hundred thousand of these Kha [331] and other more or less indigenous stock."

66: Dobby--299 [3] N-5 (no date) 1950 Laotians
116, 105, 161, 171

"Laos, the state of the Middle Mekong, is peopled by Laotians who are ethnically related to Tais. They live in small agricultural hamlets and have strong Buddhist associations and semi-feudal customs, with a disinterest in mime and dancing, therein differing from Cambodians farther south."

China Geographical Service /Service géographique de l'Indochine/ and the road surveys made by administrators at the heads of provinces nevertheless agree substantially in estimating the area of Laos at approximately 250,000 square kilometers, or about half that of France. 131 654

Population. This is the largest of the five countries in French Indo-China, and it is also the least densely populated. According to information collected on the spot, the population must be between a million and 1,200,000 inhabitants, a figure appreciably larger than the one figuring in the official documents, which estimate it to be only 800,000. Persons of the Laotian race in the strict /3/ sense form the majority. They populate the plains which are watered by the Mékong and its tributaries and the low altitude plateaus. The mountains are inhabited by highly diverse races belonging to various ethnic types, some of which are related to the Chinese, and others to the Tibetan branch, while still others are grouped under the generic name of "Khas." These various groups are scattered over the western side of the Annamitic Chain, the foothills of the plateau of Trân-Ninh and in the upper valley of the Mékong. 161 /162/ 162

The extremely low population density is to be explained by the Siamese and Chinese invasions in the course of the nineteenth century. The "Hos," plunderers who came from Yunnan, massacred the inhabitants after they had burned their villages and forced those who escaped famine or torture to settle in another region. The Siamese proceeded in a more methodical manner and depopulated the country by transporting inhabitants, livestock and elephants to the right bank of the Mekong and oftentimes taking them as far as the valley of the Ménam. 162 166 648* 175

Upper Laos. Upper Laos, a ramification of the Tibetan plateau, "is an inextricable tangle /4/ of wild and wooded mountains in the midst of which paths wind like gigantic Russian mountains" (1). The country has a savage look. These high 133 133 137

1. Dr. Lefèvre, "Le Haut-Laos" (Bulletin de la Société de Géographie commerciale, 1898).

mountain chains, which are cut here and there by deep valleys where torrents which are often invisible flow, are covered with

victorious (1), and this expedition, which would seem to have 648*
643*

1. With the help of Trân-Ninh. 728
175*

been imposed on him, is the only campaign which is related during his long forty-three year reign.

According to the Annals he strictly observed the Buddhist teaching and followed, in a more docile manner than his father had done, the pious counsels of Pha-Maha-Pasaman-Thala-Tiao, his spiritual director, "and so his kingdom knew a long period of peace and prosperity." He was a great builder of temples, and erected the pagodas of Manorom, Ouposot (with a library which was given the manuscripts which had been brought from Angkor), and Xieng-Kang which was built in memory of his daughter, the young princess Sivayaka, who died of smallpox at the age of twelve. 643* 175* /645 792/

The Three Hundred Thousand Thaïs. In 1376 he gave orders for a general census of the inhabitants of Lang-Xang. The results gave 300,000 "registered" Thaïs, not counting women, children, bonzes, foreigners, slaves and Khas (2), and Oun-Hueun took /53/ 161 175* 654

2. The number of registered non-Thaïs was about 400,000.

/C.A.M. Translator's note. Page 53 is devoted to a map: "Lan-Xang and surrounding regions at the death of Fa-Ngoun (1374)"./ as his reigning name Phaya-Sam-Sène-Thaï, the King of the Three Hundred Thousand Thaïs.

Social Organization. These folk then constituted a society grouped by families and divided into Nobles and Commoners. The Nobles were given certain privileges and helped to administer the kingdom, from the dignitaries who were princes of royal blood down to the simple officials who were responsible for collecting taxes, for assembling labor drafts, for transporting goods, etc. 631 565 175*

In the provinces the heads of circumscriptions (Muongs) were elected either from the Nobles or from the Commoners, but the choice of the electors generally fell on the son or some relative of the person who was to be replaced, unless there were some unworthiness or notorious incapability.

la Sainte-Chapelle, a la seconde boutique, a l'enseigne du Voyageur. 175* 114 /127/

naivete, the work /111/ does not have the ring of sincerity which constitutes the merit of the Dutch account. It was probably written from the reminiscences of Father J. M. Leria (1) and is of value

1. Father Giovanni-Maria Leria, a Piedmontese Jesuit, left Cambodia in April 1642 accompanied by some Cochinchinese neophytes with a caravan of Laotian traders who were returning to their country. He remained in Laos for five years "despite the opposition and the intrigues of the bonzes" and did not leave Vientiane until December 2, 1647. (Cf. Fr. Garnier, 1871, and Father Alex. de Rhodes, 1651.)

only as a document at second hand. It will nevertheless be of some interest to extract the following passages:

"In the East it (the kingdom of the 'Langiens') has the kingdom of Tonkin which stretches to the southwest towards Cochinchina, and further to the South that of Cambodia; in the southwest and the west the kingdom of Pegou; and in the north that of Ava and the province called U or Lu (2), and still further again to the north as 131 175*

2. See below, p. 176, note 1.

far as the frontiers which limit it in this direction, where there are certain peoples who are called Gnai. . . .

"Because of its fertility and because the things necessary to life are found there in abundance, the kingdom is so heavily populated that only a little while ago in the census which was taken of persons who were /112/ judged fit to serve the king at war and to bear arms, 500,000 were counted, not including the old people who are so numerous and so rubust that even of those who are a hundred years old a very large army might be formed for the defense of the kingdom if the need should arise... 421 433 161

"The chief city and the one in which the king ordinarily stays is situated in the middle of the kingdom, eighteen degrees toward our Arctic pole, and is called Langione. It has good moats and extremely high walls on one side, and on the other the great river to defend it against the undertakings of enemies. . . . The royal palace, the structure and symmetry of which are admirable, can 633 174 344

Laotian provinces, over which it exercised only nominal authority as yet (2). It must, however, combat the rights which Annam /161/

2. Even over the old principality of Vientiane, now three-quarters depopulated, where it had had the wisdom, or the weakness, to leave the old chiefs of muongs in charge of the government and had required of them only an oath of fidelity and the payment of personal and land taxes in the form of one large annual tribute. /631/

might one day be led to assert over these regions, and it must place them under military occupation so as to present the emperor Tu-Duc, and eventually the Quai d'Orsay, with a fait accompli without further delay. The great invasion of Tran-Ninh by the Hos was to furnish it a pretext in 1873.

/242/ Invasion of Tran-Ninh by the Hos (1872). A large band of "Red Flags," numbering about two thousand pirates who had been driven out of the Black River by the "Yellow Flags" towards the end of 1871, fell upon the plateau by way of Xieng-Ko, which it sacked despite the desperate resistance of the inhabitants, and entrenched itself in the island of Bandon near the village of Banban. A first column which Chao-Hung sent against it fled bravely at the first contact with the invaders, and since everything ends in a song in the land of Laos, their panic was at once turned to ridicule and put in couplets which are still sung today (1). 563 175* /167/ /579/

1. The following is a translation of the first of these couplets: 539

Sanousit leaves his opium pipe which is lost.
Sisania throws away his opium lamp.
Chao-un-Vico abandons his Annamite gong.
All is lost, all is thrown away.
They hide in the forest, gasping with fear.
They do not even keep so much as a pin.
They hasten homewards through the brush.
By the shortest road.
For three days it is impossible to eat.
Chao-un-Vico's face is no longer human (fear has distorted his features).

"It seems that this refrain was sung whenever Sanousit, 563 175*

505
133

in an almost exactly north and south direction through rich and extremely fertile plains where villages succeed one another almost without interruption. Halfway between Bassac and Khong there is another large island, called Don-Saï, which like Don-Dèng is highly populated and well-cultivated. Upstream from the island of Khong the river becomes much wider (eight to ten kilometers) and contains an important [96] group of islands which, by reason of their number, are known as Si-Pan-Don (4000 islands). The island of Khong is by far the most important. It is twenty kilometers long, seven wide, contains several fine villages and has a total population of 10,000 (1).

[361]

(1) In all Laos, this is the point where the population density is greatest with respect to the area (1500 inhabitants per 100 square kilometers).

[16]

On this island is located the city of Khong, the former capital of Lower Laos. [Illustration here]

[361]

Slightly below the 14th parallel is found the island of Khône, famed for its waterfalls which form an absolute obstacle to navigation. Francis Garnier has given us a detailed description of the falls, which he calls cataracts. A few lines of his description are given below (2):

(2) Francis Garnier, op. cit. [Voyage d'exploration en Indo-Chine, 1885.]

"The two largest channels and the most beautiful cataracts are found on the outermost arms of the river, the Salaphe branch and the Paphèng branch. There one may see waterfalls more than fifteen meters in vertical height and which [97] sometimes reach a width of one kilometer. The broken line of cataracts has a total extent of twelve or thirteen kilometers. Upstream the river narrows momentarily until it occupies not more than half this extent, then it spreads out again over the immense plateau of rocks which precedes the falls, losing itself in the midst of numberless islands and embracing between its two banks a space of nearly five leagues."

We have already seen that a railway was established from north to south across the island of Khône to serve as a link between the reaches of Kratié and Bassac. [Illustration here]

The reach of Bassac can be navigated by steam launches during

[123] [Illustration here]

CHAPTER IV

1. POPULATION

161

The population of Laos is extremely sparse. For an area of 267,000 square kilometers there are only about 470,000 inhabitants (1).

(1) Official figure, taken from a report by the Superior Resident in Laos.

or an overall average of 176 inhabitants per hundred square kilometers. Southern Laos or Lower Laos has 300,000 inhabitants for 112,000 square kilometers, or 270 inhabitants per hundred square kilometers. Northern or Upper Laos, with an area of 155,000 square kilometers (33,000 more than the above), has only 170,000 inhabitants, or 110 inhabitants per hundred square kilometers.

[124] At the beginning of our occupation, and before a complete census of the country had been taken, it was supposed that the population was much larger. Some travelers even spoke of a population exceeding two million. A scholarly dictionary which appeared two years ago gives Laos from one to two million inhabitants, and the notice on Indo-China which was published on the occasion of the Exposition of 1900 has the figure vary between 600,000 and 800,000.

The low population density can be attributed to two causes:

1. The nature of the terrain;
2. Political events.

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Certain parts of Laos are poorly adapted to the cultivation of cereal grains, rice in particular, because of mountain peaks, thick forests or bare sandy spaces which are not at all favorable to the settlement of human groupings of any size.

[312]

The area of cultivable land is estimated at about 80,000 square kilometers, or about one-third of the total surface. These 80,000 square kilometers are not, moreover, evenly distributed. The southern part has a number of vast, low plains formed by the old alluvia of the Mekong. These are well irrigated or can easily be irrigated, and lend themselves particularly to farming. The northern part, on the other hand, is formed almost entirely of close-spaced mountain peaks with only comparatively narrow valleys between them

161 and a few plateaus of small extent which are the only spots suited to
311 farming and, in consequence, suited to settlements by human groups.

The uneven disposition of the country is the first cause of the low population density. It is not the only one.

161 For more than a century the Hôs and the Siamese have taken
175 turns in sacking the country, especially the northern part. Their
727 methods differed, but the final result was the same. The former
648 massacred the inhabitants after burning the villages, and forced those who had escaped famine and torture to go and settle in another region. The Siamese proceeded in a more methodical fashion, and depopulated the [125] land by making the inhabitants, livestock and elephants cross over to the right bank of the Mékong and oftentimes then taking them as far as the valley of the Ménam.

Fortunately this state of affairs, which prevailed when we took possession of Laos, is far from being immutable and there is every hope that the causes which gave birth to this forced departure will never again occur. The French occupation has safeguarded the population against the return of the old invasions, and in the same way the equity and justice of our administration make it possible for the natives to count on interior tranquillity and on the products of their labor.

Great efforts have also been made by our consuls in Siam and our administrators in Laos towards repopulating the country, and appreciable results have already been achieved in this direction. Thus by virtue of the agreement appended to the Franco-Siamese treaty of October 3, 1893, two thousand families including a minimum of eight thousand individuals of both sexes and a great deal of livestock who had previously been taken to Siam were able to return and settle on the left bank of the Mékong, the land of their origin.

168 Nothing, moreover, would stand in the way of an appeal to the other parts of Indo-China to repopulate Laos. The deltas, for example, are overflowing with people and their industrious population is so dense that the part of the land which is cultivable is by far too limited for each individual.

By offering these people a few advantages, especially in the beginning, it would be easy to attract them to Laos. By dint of hard work they would doubtless find existence comparatively easy there instead of being reduced, as they are today in certain regions, to a difficult struggle for survival.

631 [287]
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PROVINCE OF MUONG-HOU

Area: 4,500 square kilometers

Population: 4 Europeans, 8,000 natives.

Population density per 100 square kilometers: 187

Administrative Divisions

Muongs:	Number of villages	Registered inhabitants
Hou-Neua	49	1,362 (?)
Hou-Tai	35	

Muong-Hou-Neua (capital)

Distance from Vien-Tiane by way of Luang-Prabang: 766 kilometers.

Population:

4 Europeans, 250 natives.

Post occupied by the Native Guard:

Muong-Hou-Neua.....1 chief guardsman.

Postal and Telegraph service:

Muong-Hou-Neua.....Complete office.

149: Reinach--202 G-3 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

631
635
161

PROVINCE OF VIEN-POUKHA

Area: 13,000 square kilometers.

Population: 6 Europeans, 23,986 natives.

Population density per 100 square kilometers: 167

Administrative Divisions

Muongs	Number of Villages	Registered inhabitants
Vien-Poukha Xieng-Khong Xieng-Sene Luong-Nam-Tha Mugne Sing	524	10296

Muong-Sing (capital).

Distance from Vien-Tiane by way of Xieng-Khong and Luang-Prabang: 876 (?) kilometers.

Population:

3 Europeans, (?) natives.

Posts occupied by the Native Guard:

Muong-Sing..... 1 chief guardsman.
Xieng-Khong: 1 chief guardsman performing the functions of commercial agent.

Postal and Telegraph service:

Vien-Poukha
Muong-Sing
Xieng-Khong } Complete offices.

635
631
161

[289] PROVINCE OF THE HUA-PAHN-HA-TANG-HOC

Area: 8,000 square kilometers.

Population: 3 Europeans, 15,000 natives.

Population density per 100 square kilometers: 188

Administrative Divisions

Muongs	Number of villages	Registered inhabitants
Son	78	4,800 (?)
Xieng-Kho	139	
Het	49	
Hua-Muong	83	

Muong-Son (capital)

Distance from Vien-Tiane by way of Luang-Prabang: 744 kilometers.

Population:

3 Europeans, 228 natives.

Post occupied by the Native Guard:

Muong-Son.....1 chief guardsman.

Postal and Telegraph service:

none.

149: Reinach--204 G-3 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

635
631
161

[290] PROVINCE OF LUANG-PRABANG

(right and left banks)

Area: 73,750 square kilometers

Population: 13 Europeans, including 1 merchant; 121,900 natives
(67,500 on the left bank)

Population density per 100 square kilometers: 165

Administrative Divisions

Muongs	Number of villages	Registered persons
Luang-Prabang	108	
Pak-Hou	145	
Houng-Sa	27	
Pak-Ta	297	
Sagabouri	76	
Outhai-Thani-Si-Pak-Lay	114	29,494
Houng-Sieng-Houne	224	
Sai	206	
Ngoi	222	
Pak-Seng	206	
Xieng-Ngeun	108	
Khassy	59	

633
161

Luang-Prabang (capital)

Distance from Vien-Tiane:
1. By the Mekong, 426 kilometers;
2. By land, 290 kilometers.

Population:

10 Europeans, 5,900 natives.

Posts occupied by the Native Guard:

Luang-Prabang.....1 chief guardsman.

Muong-Sai.....2 chief guardsmen.

Postal and Telegraph service:

1 inspector, head of the service.

Luang-Prabang.....Complete office.

Ban-Nam-Bac.....Complete office.

Muong-Sai.....Secondary office.

Health service:

1 hospital with 1 colonial physician.

Cochinchina River Merchant Fleet:

Agency at Luang-Prabang with 1 European agent.

149: Reinach—206 G-3 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

[291] PROVINCE OF TRAN-NINH

635
631
161

Area: 20,000 square kilometers.

Population: 5 Europeans, including 2 merchants; 35,000 natives.

Population density per 100 square kilometers: 175.

Administrative Divisions:

Muongs	Number of Villages	Registered persons
Khat	34	
Kham	209	
Khang	25	
Soui	110	8,000
Sen	67	
Khouang	220	
Mok	35	

Xieng-Khouang (capital)

Distance from Vien-Tiane by way of Tourakhome: 240 (?) kilometers.

Population:

5 Europeans, 150 natives.

Post occupied by the Native Guard:

Xieng-Khouang.....1 chief guardsman.

Postal and Telegraph service:

none.

149: Reinach--207 G-3 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

63 635 161

[292]

PROVINCE OF VIEN-TIANE

Area: 20,000 square kilometers.

Population: 22 Europeans including 4 merchants; 50,000 natives.

Population density per 100 square kilometers: 205

Administrative Divisions

Muongs	Number of villages	Registered persons
Vien-Tiane	222	11,500 (?)
Pat-Choum	54	
Borikane	41	
Tourakhome	185	

Vien-Tiane (capital).

Seat of the Superior Residency

Population:

21 Europeans, 2,700 natives.

Post occupied by the Native Guard:

Vien-Tiane..... 1 inspector, 1 chief guardsman.

Postal and Telegraph service:

Vien-Tiane..... Complete office.
Pat-Choum..... Secondary office.

Health service:

[743]

1 infirmary with 1 colonial physician.

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161

Savannakhet (capital).

Distance from Vien-Tiane: 483 kilometers.

Population: 13 Europeans, 300 natives.

Posts occupied by the native guard:

Savannakhet.....1 inspector.

Muong-Phin.....1 chief guardsman.

Postal and Telegraph service:

Savannakhet.....Complete office.

Song-Khone.....Complete office.

Muong-Phin.....Secondary office.

Cochinchina River Merchant Fleet:

Main agency at Savannakhet with workshop and slipway (3 Europeans).

Launches:

"Trentinian" with 3 Europeans.

"Colombert" with 3 Europeans.

"Massie," a replacement for the other two in case of damages.

149: Reinach--218 G-3 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

[301] COMMERCIAL AGENCIES
(on the right bank of the Mekong)

439

1. Xieng-Khong and Xieng-Sene (residence at Xieng-Khong).
2. Pak-Lay and Xieng-Khan (residence at Pak-Lay).
3. Nong-Khay (residence at Vien-Tiane).
4. Outhene (residence at Pak-Hin-Boun).
5. Lakhone.
6. Ban-Mouk-Dahan, Kemmarat (residence at Savannakhet).
7. Bassac (residence at Ban-Mouang).

It will perhaps be of interest to compare some of the data contained in these tables with information which we have cited previously (1).

(1) Chapters II and IV.

161

Thus, by adding the figures given in the above tables, we find 259,750 square kilometers for the total area of Laos instead of 267,000, including 139,250 for northern Laos instead of 155,000, and 120,500 for southern Laos instead of 112,000. These differences may seem large, but in view of the fact that no complete triangulation has yet been carried out in Laos the figures 259,750 and 267,000 are close enough to one another so that they need occasion no observation.

The same cannot be said for the population. The figure 470,000 (including 170,000 for Upper Laos and 300,000 for Lower Laos) given by the Superior Resident seems to be a minimum. We [302] believe that the figure of 517,100 (199,500 for Upper Laos and 317,600 for Lower Laos) which results from adding together the figures in the tables more closely approaches reality. It is given, moreover, by the most recent notices published on each province.

In sum, it may be said today that the total population varies between these two figures and that it is approximately 500,000 inhabitants. What is more, the population of Laos is tending to increase with each passing day.

The figure 49,221 for registered persons in Lower Laos, or approximately one registered person for every six inhabitants, seems fairly correct. That for Upper Laos (65,452) is much too high and should certainly be decreased by half. It is to be supposed, moreover,

161 that the registered persons in the kingdom of Luang-Praban, who inhabit the right bank, have been included in this figure. The Laotian budget for 1898 anticipates revenues of 60, 000 piasters from personal taxes in Lower Laos, while only 35, 000 piasters are anticipated from Upper Laos, a fact tending to prove that the number of registered persons in Upper Laos is scarcely more than half those in Lower Laos.

Finally, as regards the average population density, it should be remembered that the density in France is 6, 700 inhabitants per 100 square kilometers. If the latter had a density equal to that of Laos, there would be a million inhabitants in France.

The muong of Khong has the highest population density in all Laos, or 1, 508 inhabitants per 100 square kilometers.

/303/ /Illustration at top/

CHAPTER VI

1. FLORA--FOREST RESOURCES AND THEIR EXPLOITATION

137 Since Laos has the same orographic center as Burma, Yunnan, Siam and the Malay Peninsula, the nature of the soil, the configuration of the land and the distribution of the various geological formations are also similar. It follows that its flora and, in general, all of its forest riches are like those of the above countries, which have long been studied from this particular point of view.

There are quite probably botanical studies of great interest to be made in Laos, where the flora is so varied and so rich that it has been called the "naturalist's paradise." Here, however, our purpose is quite a different one, and we shall merely try to enumerate the types of plants and trees which are already known and used as of /304/ the present time, leaving it to others who are more competent to identify the different varieties.

In addition to the arborescent varieties which will be listed further on, the forests contain many different types of plants and flowers, most of which are unknown and which are as noteworthy for the diversity of their colors and the grace of their forms as for their delicious perfumes. There are also mosses of great delicacy and sweetness, as well as dwarf and arborescent ferns with elegant serrations and harmoniously shaded colors varying from yellow to poppy-red.